

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07

FMC-02 INR-07 NSAE-00 CG-00 OFA-01 DLOS-04 TRSE-00

AID-05 OMB-01 CIEP-02 /040 W

----- 064622

R 040553Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL KHORRAMSHahr

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 275

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

COMMIDEASTFOR (POUCH)

UNCLAS KHORRAMSHahr 065

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRAN, ECON, IR

SUBJ: FIRE SLOWS KHORRAMSHahr PORT OPERATIONS

1. SUMMARY. A SERIOUS FIRE ON JULY 29 AT THE KHORRAMSHahr PORT DESTROYED FOUR LARGE WAREHOUSES AND A LARGE VOLUME OF CARGO IN OPEN STORAGE. THIS DISASTER HAS BROUGHT A HALT TO PORT CLEARANCE OPERATIONS INDEFINITELY, THOUGH DISCHARGE OF SHIPS CONTINUES AT A CURTAILED RATE. PORT CON-GESTION WAS ALREADY A SERIOUS BOTTLENECK IN IRAN'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND THIS DISASTER CAN ONLY EXACERBATE THE SITUATION. INCREASES IN ALREADY HIGH SHIPPING SURCHARGES MAY ALSO RESULT. END SUMMARY.

2. FIRE BROKE OUT AFTERNOON JULY 29 IN LARGER OF TWO WAREHOUSE AREAS IN KHORRAMSHahr PORT AND RAGED UNCONTROLLED UNTIL EARLY MORNING JULY 30. FIRE STARTED AMONG BALES
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OF COTTON AND PAPER PILED IN OPEN YARDS AND SPREAD RAPID-

LY TO LARGE SUPPLIES CANNED COOKING OIL STORED NEARBY.
STRONG WINDS SPREAD FLAMES THROUGHOUT OPEN STORAGE AREAS
DESTROYING FOUR LARGE WAREHOUSES AND HUGE QUANTITIES OF
CARGO. TWO FIRE BRIGADES ARRIVED ON SCENE 30 MINUTES
AFTER FIRE STARTED, BUT ONLY WATER SOURCE WAS LOW PRESSURE
CITY DRINKING WATER SYSTEM WHICH PROVED TOTALLY INADEQUATE.
FIRE WAS FINALLY BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL MORNING JULY 30
AFTER SEVERAL HUNDRED YARDS OF PIPE WERE LAID TO SHATT-
AL-ARAB ESTUARY.

3. SOME FREIGHT IN BURNED AREA BELONGED TO PRIVATE IM-
PORTERS, BUT MOST BELONGED TO GOI AGENCIES. COOKING OIL
WAS IMPORTED BY COMMERCE MINISTRY'S FOREIGH TRANSACTIONS
COMPANY (FTC) TO SUBSIDUZE CONSUMER MARKET. AMONG OTHER
ITEMS DESTROYED WERE TIRES, FARM AND ROADBUILDING MACHIN-
ERY, AND SPARE PARTS FOR VEHICLES AND INDUSTRIAL MACHINES.

4. SHIPS CONTINUE TO DISCHARGE AT JETTIES, BUT ALL
CLEARANCE OF FREIGHT FROM PORT HAS CEASED INDEFINITELY
PENDING ASSESSMENT OF LOSS AND DAMAGE BY PORTS AND SHIP-
PING ORGANIZATION (PSO), CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES. AND
INSURANCE COMPANIES. A PSO SURVEY TEAM ARRIVED FROM
TEHRAN JULY 30 TO ASSESS DAMAGE AND COORDINATE GOI
REACTION.

5. ALL OBSERVERS PRAISE DARING EMERGENCY EFFORTS OF
KOREAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ENGAGED IN PORT EXPANSION
PROJECTS IN NEARBY AREAS OF PORT. THEY VOLUNTARILY
ATTEMPTED CLEAR FREIGHT INFRONT OF ADVANCING FLAMES WITH
FORKLIFTS.

6. NO OFFICIAL ESTIMATES OF DAMAGES ARE YET AVAILABLE.
RUMORS CICULATING AMONG LOCAL SHIPPING AGENTS AND IM-
PORTERS CITE LOSSES IN MILLIONS OR EVEN BILLIONS OF DOL-
LARS AND ALLEGE DESTRUCTION OF TWENTY TO THIRTY PERCENT
OF CARGO STORED IN PORT, GIVING INDICATION THAT DISASTER
WAS OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS.

7. COMMENT. SLOW CLEARANCE PROCEDURES AND POORLY ORGAN-
IZED FREIGHT HANDLING OPERATIONS AT IRAN'S LARGEST PORT,
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ALREADY A SERIOUS BOTTLENECK FOR THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOP-
MENT PLANS, WILL BE FURTHER EXACERBATED BY THIS DISASTER.
PRESENTLY 132 SHIPS ARE AWAITING TURN AT KHORRAMSHahr AND
FREIGHT SURCHARGE FROM U.S. IS SIXTY PERCENT. FURTHER
SLOWDOWNS AT THE PORT CAN ONLY RESULT IN INCREASED SHIP-
PING COSTS AND EVEN GREATER DELAYS. SHIPPING AGENTS WERE
PREDICTING A JUMP IN SURCHARGE RATE TO NINETY PERCENT
EVEN BEFORE FIRE. END COMMENT.

MARSHALL

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NNN

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